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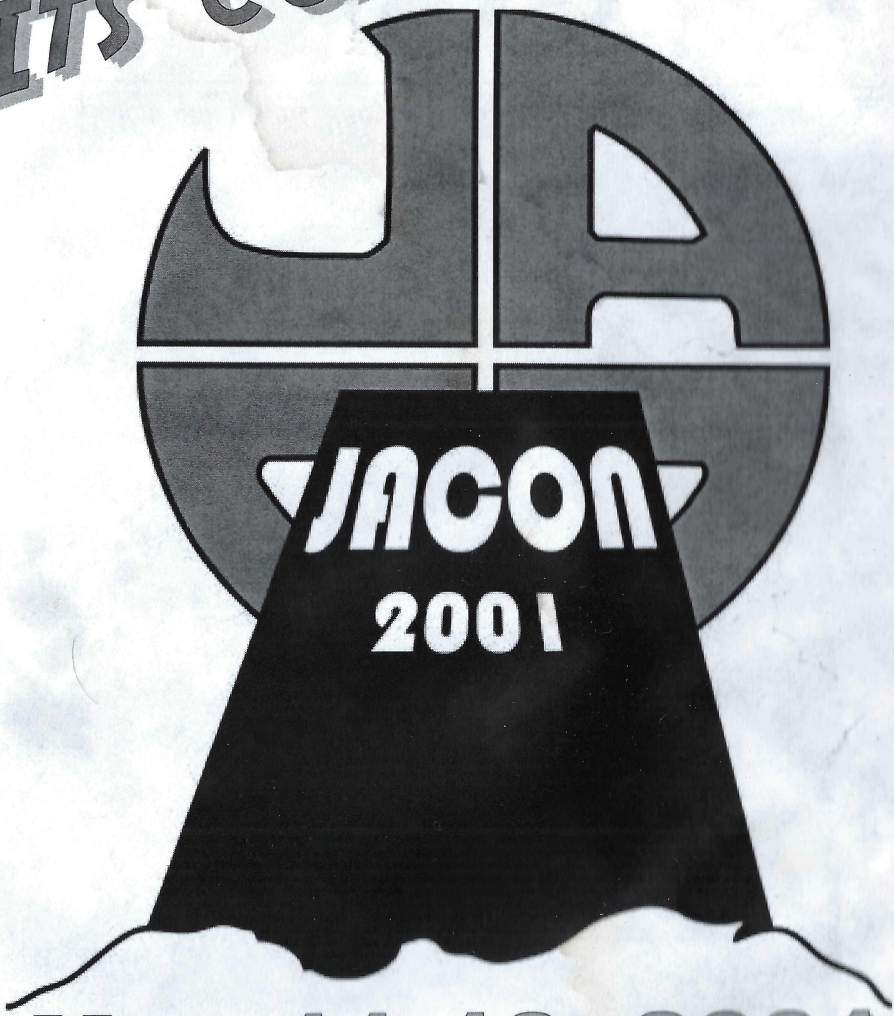
# PROJECT JACO

The Official Journal of The Japanese Animation Club of Orlando

# ITS COMING...




## May 11-13, 2001

## www.jacon.org

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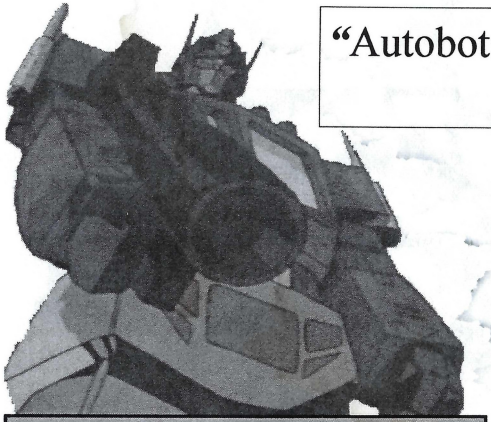


"Autobots, Transform and roll out!"
***-Optimus Prime***

# A Few Words from the Editor...

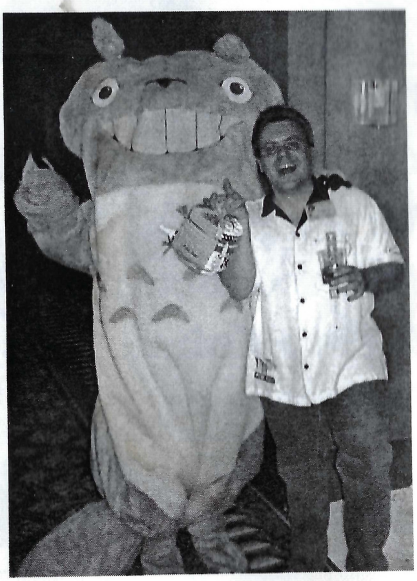
Greetings and salutations, welcome to yet another issue of the official journal of the Japanese Animation Club of Orlando, Project JACO. This issue signifies a major milestone for JACO as whole. Ten years ago this month a group of men met in the back room of a local comic book and science fiction collectibles store. They were there to watch raw episodes of Maison Ikkoku recorded on Betamax tape (those are the little short tapes TV news crews use) on a 19" Television. These shows had no frills like 'subtitles' or S-VHS masters. Instead of subtitles, a translated script, which was downloaded off that new fangled internet, was handed out to the attendees or read aloud next to the TV. These were raw and recorded directly off Japanese broadcasts by one of the gentleman there, club founder Joe Vecchio. Who would be able to guess that 10 years later that small group in the backroom would grow into the over 200 anime fans that make up JACO today?

Like the last issue, this one brings some new comers to the Project JACO stage. Valeska Gary and Damon add their talents to our fan art section. Hopefully this issue's center spread shows some of the fun had by our conventioneers at JACON. The photos were taken by either myself (I was the stumpy guy running around with the digital camera) or M. Schultz of Rising Sun Entertainment (www.risingsun.net). Maybe you will see someone you know, or even yourself in the collage. It isn't the center spread I promised, but I still think its pretty neato.

The cornerstone of this issue is John Stepp's overview of Mobile Suit Gundam's Universal Century. I hope all you Gundam Wing and Gundam X fans spend the time and read through this piece. Yes there was nearly 15 years of MS Gundam before Gundam Wing ever hit the airwaves in Japan. Adding to the giant robot genre is Lonny's overview of the original big robot show, Mazinger!

Finally I want to call on you, the readers of Project JACO, to send in your reviews, editorials, overviews and fan art for inclusion in this journal. Project JACO is only what the membership makes it.

-Kenneth Nabbe
***Editor-n-Chief Project JACO***



*Project JACO* is the quarterly publication of the **Japanese Animation Club of Orlando**. Library Membership dues for JACO are $20 a year. Library Membership grants borrowing privileges from the club's extensive library of anime videotapes. Full Memberships are $30 a year. Full members have borrowing privileges, receive all club literature, and get discounts on club-produced items (such as T-shirts). Post-paid Issues of *Project JACO* can be purchased for $2.50.

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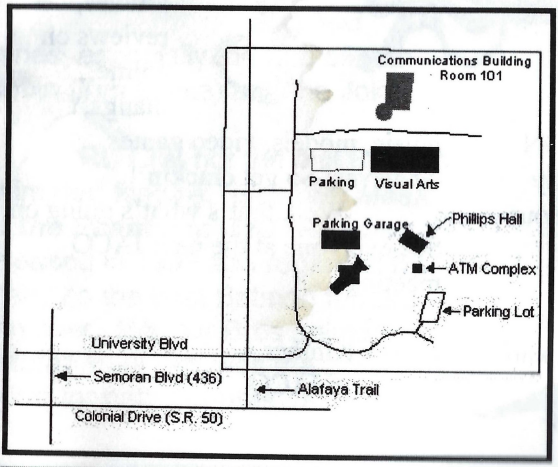
JACO meets every second and forth Saturday of the month in Room 101 of the Communications Building, at the University of Central Florida. Meetings begin at 7:00 PM and last until around midnight. Membership in JACO is encouraged, but not required to attend programming meetings.

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This month's cover is an photo-realistic depiction of Jion forces spying on the Gundam RX-78 tests on Side 7, the first step in the MS Gundam epic.

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# Fearless Firings

## A Few Words from the President

Welcome! Hope everybody had a great time over the holidays, and hope we're all ready for a new year of anime! Well, for a change, I don't have much to talk about…Can you believe it? So… here we go!

First of all, JACON 2000 was a huge success! We had over 500 anime fans attending, making us the largest anime con in Florida! Everyone seemed to have a great time, and plans for JACON 2001 are well underway! I'd like to thank everyone who helped make JACON such a great con, and I'd especially like to thank everyone who came out to enjoy the con. JACON will continue to be a means for us to introduce even more people to this wonderful art form called anime, and a chance for those of us who have already discovered it to party! For information on JACON 2001, visit www.jacon.org. In addition, JACO has several events we're looking to attend this year, including our return to Megacon with Anime Sushi!

JACO is ready to kick off another semester! Our viewing schedule is up on the web-page for your viewing pleasure! Also, don't forget that Project JACO needs you! Drawings, articles, reviews on anime, manga, music, models, video games… whatever! So get crackin'!

Well, that's what's going on! See everyone at the next JACO meeting!

Nicole Kintner
President JACO

# WHAT WERE THEY THINKING?!?!

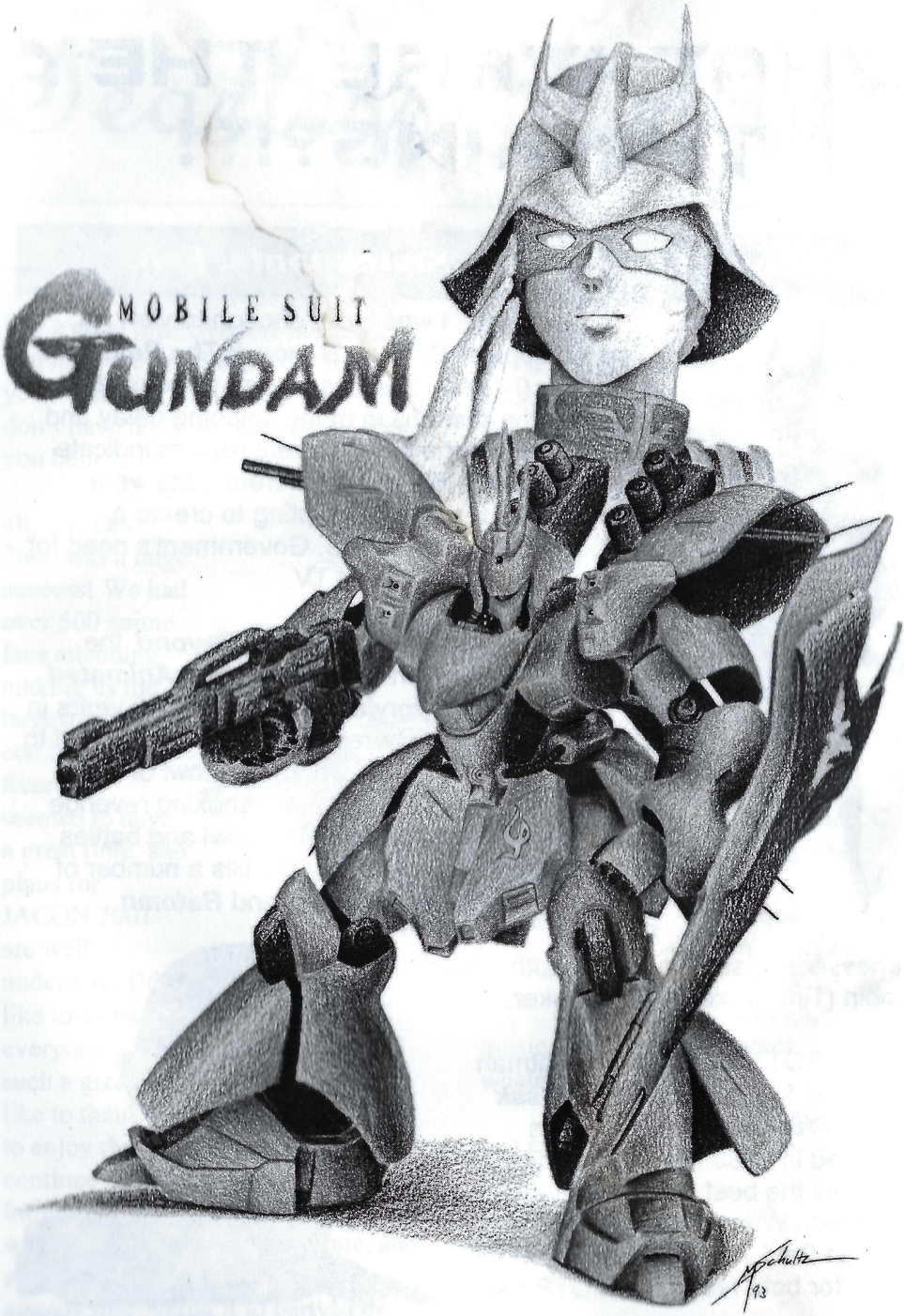
**A Commentary By: *Joey Snackpants, Esq.***

Recently, I was lucky enough to view an unedited copy of ***Batman Beyond: The Return of the Joker*** (ROTJ). Discussion had run quite hot regarding the reasons in of the shipping delay and rumored cuts to the film. Current reports indicate that nearly thirty-three (33) different edits were performed on the film, attempting to create a product that fit the new U.S. Government's need for a kinder, gentler children's TV.

For those unfamiliar with ***Batman Beyond***, the story is a continuation of ***Batman: The Animated Series***. This new story arc is set nearly 40 years in the future; a future where Bruce Wayne is too old to care about his company, life, or the cowl of the Dark Knight. A new young man, seeking revenge for his father's murder, dons the cowl and battles Gotham's nocturnal evils. ROTJ fills a number of gaps left between the ***Batman*** and ***Batman Beyond*** series, especially the fate of both Robin (Tim Drake) and the Joker.

ROTJ is not the first Batman animated feature. ***Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*** (MOTP), was released in 1993 and regarded by many as the best Batman feature film ever. Warner Bros animation veteran Paul Dini was the principle writer for both features. MOTP had

*(Continued on page 32)*


MOBILE SUIT
GUNDAM
Schultz
93

# KIDOU SENSHI

## *An Overview of Gundam's Universal Century*

**By: John Stepp**

Gundam is likely the most profitable anime franchise in anime history. The original 1979 television series, *Mobile Suit Gundam* (*Kidou Senshi Gundam*), has blossomed into an immense multimedia property. Gundam has spawned additional TV shows, motion pictures, OVA projects, manga, novels, radio dramas, computer games, musical CDs, sourcebooks, artwork, clothing, collectible knickknacks, toys, and (of course) a couple thousand different model kits. Gundam is currently spearheading Bandai's entrance into the American anime market and can be found weekly on the Cartoon Network.

One important reason for Gundam's 20 years of success is that it's a show about ideas, more than characters, gimmicks, or even big robots. Recurring themes include the struggle for maturity, the horrors of war, the fear of the different, the ambiguity of politics, the crisis of personal tragedy, and the potential for personal heroism. The strength of Gundam's ideas allows the show to be easily remolded with different faces, different robots, different settings, and even different artistic styles.

Bandai has taken advantage of this flexibility over the years and created several different Gundam continuities (such as "G Gundam" and "Gundam Wing") to cater to different viewers and add variety to the Gundam line. The heart and soul of the series, however, is the Universal Century continuity, the epic story line that began with *Mobile Suit Gundam*. This article takes a look at the different video projects comprising the Universal Century.

## Gundam Essentials

Every Gundam story has giant robot vehicles, usually called MOBILE SUITS. Armed with a variety of conventional and exotic weaponry, these machines rule the battlefield using tactics derived from WWII naval warfare. (Little aircraft sinking big warships with relative ease.) The high-tech edge is blunted by MINOVSKI PARTICLES, a byproduct of fusion powerplants that just happens to block long-range detection and communications systems. This restricts mobile suit conflict to very exciting, very close range.

The star of any Gundam story is, naturally, one or more Gundam mobile suits. A GUNDAM is usually a general-purpose design and is almost always a prototype, sporting the latest advances in combat technology. Gundams of any design boast a distinctive head design, including two eyes, some sort of simulated mouth, and a V-shaped antenna. They are traditionally blue and white in color, with red and yellow accents.

Gundam always includes limited space travel and cylindrical orbital colonies. The colonies are always squabbling with people still living on Earth, usually demanding independence from an imperialist government that just doesn't understand life in space. This disagreement is frequently complicated by the development of psychic powers by humans raised in space. These new humans, called NEWTYPES, display varying degrees of telepathy, precognition, extrasensory perception, extraordinary luck, and amazingly quick adaptability. The common citizenry fears and envies newtypes, while governments rush to exploit them as unparalleled weapons and combat pilots.

There are no true good guys or bad guys in a Gundam story, not in the traditional sense. Most characters are just ordinary people, caught in extraordinary circumstances. Both sides in any conflict do terrible things in their quest for victory and both sides produce their share of heroes and sympathetic characters. A particular character may be utterly villainous, but his comrades or underlings are probably good people and he, himself, probably has some admirable qualities. In Gundam, enemies often develop mutual respect, become friends, or fall in love.

## The Universal Century

At some point in the future, Earth's population grows too large for the planet's ecosystem to handle and humanity begins to move into man-made, self-sufficient, orbital colonies. The start of this great migration marks the beginning of a new era for mankind and is inaugurated as Year 0000 of the Universal Century.

However, the ruling elite of the EARTH FEDERATION government stays planet-bound and soon loses touch with and compassion for their fellows in the heavens above. An orbital independence movement erupts into civil war when its peaceful leader is murdered. The ONE YEAR WAR begins. The aggressive oribitals, or spacenoids, form themselves into the JION ARCHDUCHY. Led by the ambitious Zabi family, the Jions win many rapid victories thanks to their new weapon – the mobile suit.

# Mobile Suit Gundam

## UC0079

## 43 TV Episodes 1979-1981

## 3 Films 1981-1982

Desperate to counter Jion success, the Federation government builds its own prototype mobile suits. A surprise Jion strike nearly destroys both the prototypes and their new spacecraft carrier, *White Base*, but civilian loyalists save the mobile suits and bravely replace the many casualties in the carrier's crew. Dogged pursuit from space to Earth prevents resupply for the ship or relief for the civilians. The ship's continued survival is won by luck, the superiority of the Gundam prototype, and the amazing talents of its pilot, young AMURO REI.

Amuro is the first recognized newtype and makes an unbeatable combination with the Gundam, with its bulletproof armor and revolutionary energy-based weaponry. Jion expends tremendous resources trying to stop the Gundam, to no avail. As *White Base* gradually shifts from retreat to attack, Amuro finds a rival in Jion ace CHAR AZNABLE. Although Char can never defeat Amuro, it seems he simply cannot be killed and always returns to threaten our heroes. This conflict turns bitter when it takes the life of the woman they both loved, who is accidentally killed by Amuro in his zeal to defeat Char.

Like Amuro, Char is a newtype, though not as strong. He's also secretly the son of the murdered spacenoid leader and he blames the Zabis for the crime. He assumed the fictional identity of Char Aznable to infiltrate the Jion military and take his revenge when the Zabis least expect it.

As Jion is pushed back into space, the war turns vicious. Colonies are dropped on terrestrial cities, a colony-sized laser obliterates entire fleets with a single shot, and the Jion leaders turn against each other. Char only slays a single Zabi, Amuro kills two in combat (though he needed Char's help for one), and two are murdered by their own family. Only the infant Mineva survives and is spirited away to a hidden asteroid base called AXIS. With its fleet in shambles and without strong direction, the Jion Archduchy surrenders, Amuro returns to civilian life, and Char vanishes in the confusion.

# The 08th Mobile Team

## UC0079

## 11 OVA Episodes 1996-1999

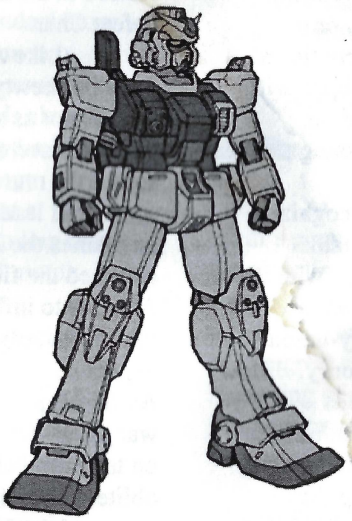
## 1 Film 1998

Late in the One Year War, young Federation pilot SHIRO AMADA is given his first command. During his shuttle flight down to Earth, he steals a small work pod to save a fellow Federation mobile suit pilot from attacking Jion suits. Using surprise and amazing luck, Shiro spoils the Jion attack, but is forced to flee his crippled pod to nearby spaceship wreckage. While awaiting rescue, he meets AINA SAKHALIN, a pretty young Jion pilot and one of the attackers Shiro just defeated. They overcome initial hostilities and become friendly before they are recovered by their respective comrades.

When Shiro finally arrives in Southeast Asia to assume command of the 08th Mobile Suit Team, he must adapt to the new mass-production Gundam suit, whip his band of misfits into shape, and somehow win their confidence and loyalty. Not an easy task.

Hidden in a nearby mountain stronghold, GINIAS SAKHALIN unveils his new mobile armor, the Apsaras and calls upon his sister, Aina, to test-fly the beast. The Asparas clashes occasionally with the 08th Team during testing and is eventually brought down by Shiro, stranding both pilots in harsh mountainous terrain. Working together for mutual survival, they renew their friendship and grow still closer, before their inevitable rescue.

Ginias's efforts to build a second Apsaras are interrupted by a Jion general escaping defeat in Europe. The general intends to return home in the space cruiser currently powering the mountain fortress. Ginias won't have his plans disrupted and kills the general in a messy accident that inadvertently alerts the 08th Team to his whereabouts.

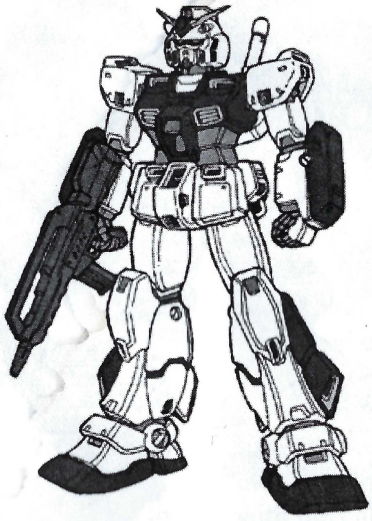


The entire Federation battalion is brought to bear on the Jion fortress. Jion valor and sacrifice are no match for the superior Federation troops and Aina attempts to negotiate a safe retreat for the surviving Jions. Ginias again refuses to be unstaged, shoots Aina, and launches his new and improved Apsaras. Ginias is quickly shot down and Shiro, after recovering the injured Aina, dashes in to destroy the mobile armor so the Federation won't gain its advanced technology. Both Shiro and Aina are lost in the resulting explosion and presumed dead, while in reality, they sneak off to lead a quiet, anonymous life together in the jungles.

# Mobile Suit Gudam 0080: War in the Pocket

## 6 OVA Episodes 1989

In the final days of the One Year War, the rookie Jion pilot BERNIE WEISSMAN is shot down in a neutral colony. Before being rescued, Bernie acquires photos of a secret military cargo at the colony's spaceport. Jion Command identifies the cargo as components for a new Gundam prototype, one designed especially for Federation ace Amuro Rei. Bernie is promoted to an elite commando team, which is dispatched to infiltrate the colony and destroy the Gundam before it can be assembled.



The Jion plan is complicated by an enthusiastic 11-year-old boy, AL IZUHARA. Al is fascinated by the war, stumbles upon the Jions, and becomes a grand nuisance. Bernie, the team's rookie, is ordered to keep the boy out of trouble. The two survive a few misadventures and grow close. Bernie even begins a tentative romance with Al's lovely neighbor, CHRISTINA MCKENZIE.

Bernie rejoins the Jion team as they launch their daring strike. Unfortunately, they fail. Spectacularly. The Jions are surprised by a fully functional Gundam, which easily destroys their single mobile suit. Federation guards gun down the rest of the team and only Bernie survives.

Al encourages Bernie to make a second attempt at the Gundam, but Bernie is shaken. He warns that the Jions intend to destroy both Gundam and colony with nuclear weapons and slinks off to make his escape. Before he leaves the colony, Bernie is overcome by conscience and genuine concern for the civilians around him. He finds courage and inspiration and, with Al's help and some scavenged equipment (including his old, abandoned mobile suit), sets a surprising trap for the Gundam.

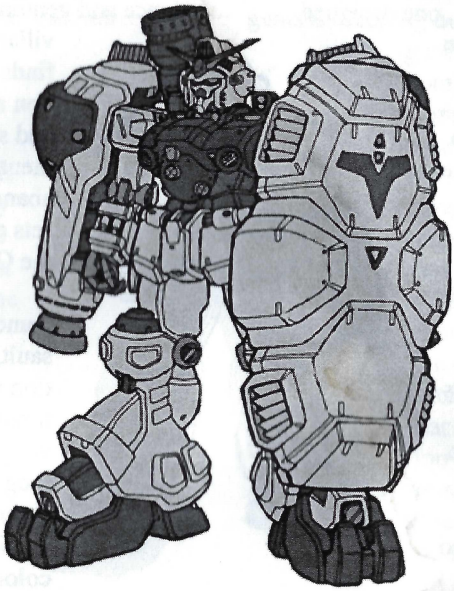
As Bernie launches his desperate assault, Al learns that Federation warships have captured the Jion nuclear weapons. The colony is no longer in danger and Bernie doesn't need to risk his life. Al races across the colony to pull his friend out of danger, but arrives just in time to watch Bernie die as he cripples the Gundam. While the horrified child watches, Christina is pulled from the wrecked Gundam's pilot compartment.

The One Year War ends, the colonists start rebuilding, and Christina makes a gradual recovery, never suspecting she killed her own boyfriend. Al, however, struggles against despair for the loss of both his friend and his innocence.

# Mobile Suit Gudam 0083: Stardust Memories

## 12 OVA Episodes 1991-1992
## 1 Film 1992

Three years after Jion's defeat, rag-tag remnants of its space fleet rally for a grand scheme to inspire a new orbital revolt – Operation: Stardust. Jion ace pilot ANAVEIL GATO steals a nuclear-equipped Gundam prototype. The Federation carrier *Albion* pursues, but most of its crew are inexperienced and no match for Gato. Their best hope lies with ENSIGN KOU URAKI and a second, non-nuclear Gundam prototype. Kou struggles to master his Gundam, to win the respect of his fellow pilots, and to woo the lovely Gundam engineer NINA PURPLETON.



Despite heroic Federation efforts, Gato and his Gundam escape to space. *Albion* follows, but Kou's recklessness and inexperience with space combat nearly destroy his own Gundam. While the Gundam is being repaired and upgraded, Kou meets and latter battles a crippled Jion pilot on the moon, grows up a bit, and finally wins Nina's favor.

The repairs are completed just in time for Gato's strike against the Federation space fleet. During a parade-like show of force, Gato unleashes the nuclear power of his Gundam and shatters the fleet. Kou fails to prevent the attack, but does catch Gato as he's retreating. The resulting battle destroys both mobile suits, but earns Gato's respect for Kou.

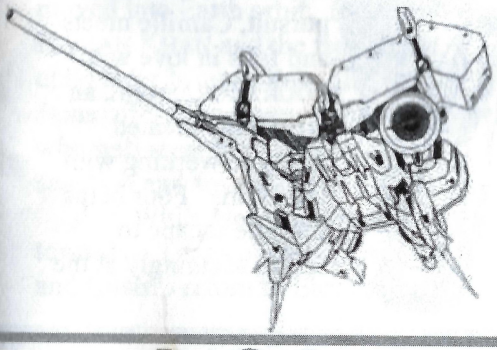
Gato gains a new, powerful mobile armor (a non-humanoid war machine) from a neutral Jion fleet from the asteroid base Axis. Gato's allies meanwhile capture a recently completed colony and send it on a collision course with the moon. Surviving elements of the Federation fleet chase the colony, but as they close on their target, Jion agents blackmail the lunar city into

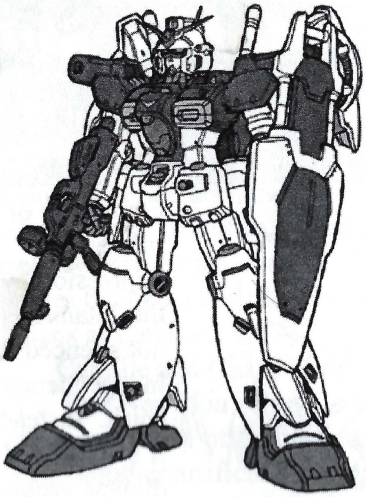
redirecting the falling colony towards Earth! This surprise maneuver leaves the pursuing fleet far behind.

Kou and the *Albion* defy orders and steal a third, final Gundam prototype (optimized for space combat). As Kou fights his way through the Jion fleet using the Gundam's incredible power, a rival Federation faction reveals its own weapons – a traitor highly placed within the Jion ranks and the Solar System, a huge array of mirrors capable of refocusing sunlight to produce awesome destruction. Neither stops the falling colony.

Nina interrupts Kou and Gato as they struggle aboard the falling colony. Nina and Gato were lovers in the past and she blocks Kou long enough for Gato to set the colony on its final course. As thanks, Gato tosses Nina into an escape pod and launches her towards safety. Kou and Gato continue their duel in space.

In the climactic chaos, Kou is disabled by the dying blast of the Solar System, Gato is killed trying to break through Federation lines, and the colony falls on the American





Midwest, devastating the breadbasket of North America. Though Operation: Stardust succeeds at every turn, the colonies do not rise against the Federation. Jion's grand sacrifice is made in vain.

The Federation concludes that orbital terrorism is a serious threat and commissions a new military force to police the colonies. Ironically, the leaders of this new force, called the TITANS, are from the Federation faction that interfered with the Gundam team in favor of their ineffective Solar System. The men who backed the Gundam team are removed from command.

Kou serves a brief prison term for a variety of crimes, but is released when the details of Operation: Stardust are deleted from official records. He returns to service as test pilot with his surviving friends and the penitent Nina Purpleton.

# Mobile Suit Zeta Gundam

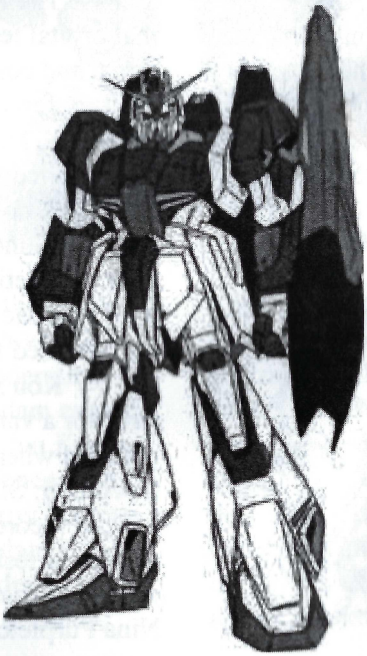
## UC0087

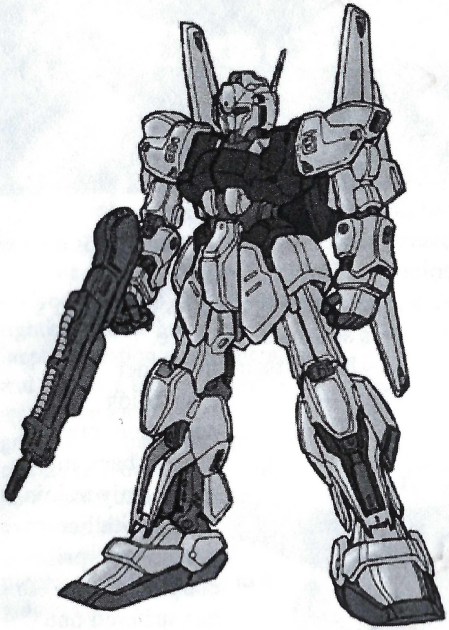
## 50 TV Episodes 1985-86

Four years of ruthless oppression by the Titans has not silenced the independence spirit. Instead, it's organized a diverse group of rebels, ranging from businessmen to retired Federation soldiers, into the Anti-Earth United Government organization (AEUG). Equipped with state-of-the-art mobile suits and led by a disguised Char Aznable (now known as QUATTRO BAGINA), AEUG begins its revolution by attacking a Titans base that's testing new GUNDAM MK. II prototypes. Aided by budding civilian newtype CAMILLE VIDAN, AEUG escapes with all three Gundams.

As AEUG prepares for a daring assault on the Federation's terrestrial headquarters, Titans forces pursue Quattro and Camille. Camille displays strong newtype abilities, quickly becomes a respected AUEG pilot, and begins a rivalry with Titans pilot JERID MESA (Jerid is a jerk and kills Camille's mother; Camille kills Jerid's girlfriend and best friend). *Aghama* rescues a civilian transport and takes aboard a batch of civilians and BRIGHT NOAH, former captain of *White Base*. Bright is immediately given command of *Aghama*.

The assault on Federation HQ turns into a trap that nearly destroys the AEUG force. Most of the survivors escape back into space, but Camille must join forces with Earth-based freedom fighters for a time, including the legendary Amuro Rei. As they flee from Federation pursuit, Camille meets and falls in love with FOUR MURASAME, an artificially created newtype working with the Titans. Four helps Camille escape to space, seemingly at the



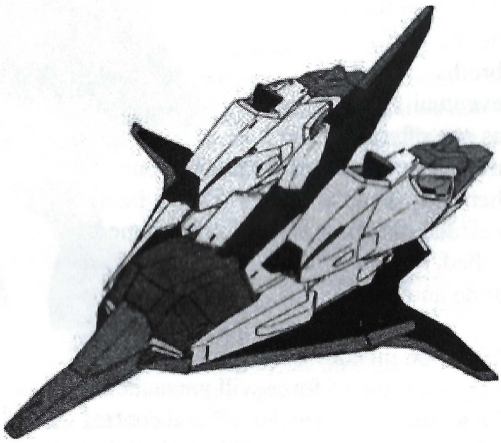


cost of her own life.

As Camille and friends gain new mobile suits, including the transformable Z GUNDAM, the Titans gain complete Federation support and go on the offensive, murdering thousands of colonists and building a new colony laser. Two new parties enter the struggle: PAPTIMUS SCIROCCO adds his engineering genius and newtype powers to the Titans, and Jion returns in the form of the asteroid base Axis, physically moved into Earth orbit. Led by HAMAN KHAN and the figurehead child ruler Mineva Zabi, these Neo-Jions offer their troops to anyone who will meet their price – official sanction and sovereignty.

While Neo-Jion leans towards a Titans alliance, Camille and Quattro return to Earth to help storm a major Titans base. Camille finds Four still alive and seduces her away from the Titans again, only to helplessly watch her die at the hands of the vengeful Jerid Mesa. Quattro confronts the Federation Senate with details of Titans atrocities, reveals himself as Char Aznable, and persuades the Federation to brand the Titans as outlaws.

Camille and Char return to space to find Neo-Jion siding with AEUG (who finally offered a better deal) and another artificial Newtype claiming to be Camille's long-lost sister. As the forces clash over control of the colony laser, Scirocco murders the Titan's leadership and assumes control. An immense final battle kills off most of the cast and destroys both the Titans' and the AEUG fleets. Char is seemingly killed in battle against Haman, while Camille obliterates Scirocco, though Scirocco's parting shot cripples Camille's mind. Neo-Jion is left as the sole orbital power.

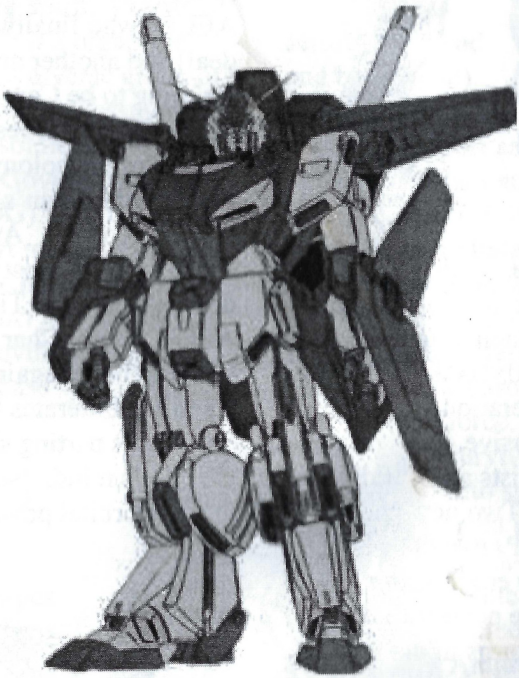


# Mobile Suit Gundam ZZ

## UC0088

## 47 TV Episodes 1986-1987

After losing all its pilots in the climax of *Z Gundam*, the *Ahgama* desperately recruits a band of rebellious newtype teens. Led by JUDO ASHITA, the kids hold off casual Neo-Jion aggression and get the comatose Camille Vidan to safety. AEUG soon goes on the offensive with the powerful ZZ GUNDAM, which can split into three separate fighter craft.



Judo's sister is captured by Neo-Jion and is adopted by Judo's rival, the bumbling pilot GREMY TOTO. Judo is adopted himself by a very young Neo-Jion pilot, PULL, who defects to follow her new "big brother." Pull is eventually revealed as one of several newtype clones and is killed by one of her clone sisters. Judo's sister is later rescued, then lost again and presumed killed, heightening the tension between Judo and Gremy.

Failing at colonial diplomacy, Neo-Jion invades Earth. Haman Khan hopes a show of force will persuade the Federation to surrender official control of the colonies. The AEUG kids pursue, but their spirited opposition is overwhelmed when Neo-Jion drops a colony on Dublin, Ireland. The Federation quickly accedes to Haman's demands and sues for peace.

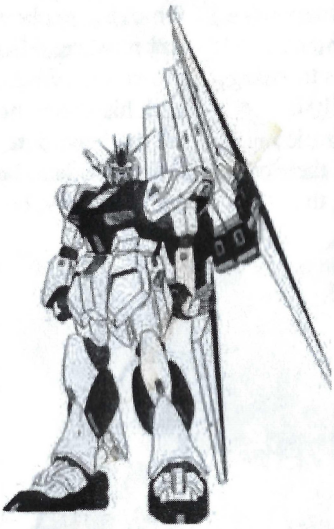
Judo's team, not under Federation command, pursues Haman back into space, only to join forces with her against a surprise coup. Gremy Toto has suffered one embarrassment too many and, manipulated by ambitious advisors, now believes himself a clone of one of the original Zabis and far more fit to lead than Haman. The battle rips Neo-Jion apart and the Federation quickly moves to recover their colonies. After losing her tenuous empire and being defeated by Judo, Haman takes her own life.

Judo is reunited with his sister (who miraculously escaped death and hid for the rest of the series), learns that Camille is recovering, and sets off on an exploratory mission to Jupiter with his new girlfriend.

# Char's Counterattack

## UC0093

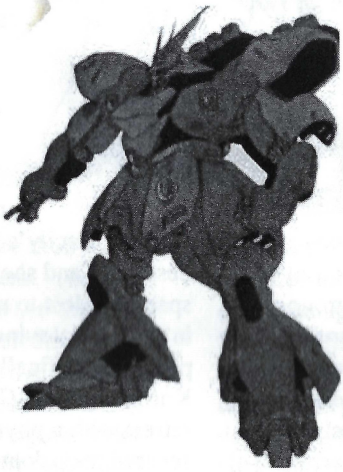
## 1 Film 1988



Five years after the close of *ZZ Gundam*, Char Aznable returns, leading a revived Neo-Jion Archduchy, fighting to overthrow the inept Federation government, and planning to force humanity to abandon Earth for good. Once the entire species lives in orbit, it will only be a matter of time before everyone becomes a newtype and the divisive fear and prejudice will give way to a golden age.

Amuro Rei and Bright Noah are again working for the Federation and valiantly struggling against Char's political manipulations and superior military force. To even the odds, Amuro secures the new, newtype-friendly NU-GUNDAM.

After gaining Federation attention by dropping an asteroid on their capital city, Char secretly meets with diplomats to negotiate a peace. He agrees to surrender his fleet if the Federation will sell him the asteroid base Axis, allowing him to create his own home colony. The Federation foolishly agrees.



Amuro and Char accidentally meet on a neutral colony (after Char's negotiations) and start brawling. Char is saved from capture by QUESS PARAYA, the temperamental daughter of the head Federation diplomat. Grateful for her assistance and impressed by her undeveloped newtype strength, Char inducts her into his army and begins her training.

The Neo-Jions use their fleet's "surrender" to seize a number of nuclear weapons, which they load into Axis (to make a bigger boom when it hits) before sending the asteroid hurtling towards Earth. Federation troops fail to stop its advance.

While Bright Noah plans a desperate last-ditch counteroffensive, Char confronts strife within his own command, which is essentially a cult of personality. Jealousy is growing between normals and newtypes and even between the newtypes. Char ruthlessly manipulates his lieutenants, often outright lying to ensure their loyalty. Meanwhile, Amuro learns the advanced technology for his nu-Gundam was supplied by Char, suggesting this entire conflict is only seting the stage for a final battle between the two rivals.

Bright's final assault fails to stop Axis. Char's elite newtype force is wiped out. Quess is killed by Amuro's new girlfriend, who is killed in turn by Quess's aspiring boyfriend – HATHAWAY NOAH, Bright's own son. Amuro bests Char in mobile suit combat, grabs Char's escape pod, and tries to stop Axis' fall using their combined psychic power, augmented by the nu-Gundam. Amuro and Char squabble until they are incinerated in reentry, but Amuro's efforts deflect Axis into orbit. Earth is saved.

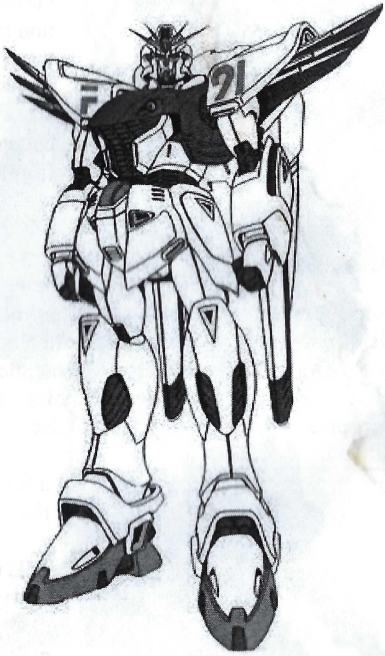
# Gundam F-91

## UC0123

## 1 Film 1991

In UC 0123, after 30 years of peaceful recovery and development, another group of colonists starts thirsting for conquest. The RONAH family is disgusted by the apathetic Federation government and plans to create their own nation using their private army, the CROSSBONE VANGUARD.

SEABOOK ARNO and CECILY FAIRCHILD are teenaged friends displaced by the Crossbone invasion of their home colony. As they flee the battle, Cecily's stepfather steals her away and shoots Seabook when he tries to rescue the girl. Cecily learns she is really a Ronah, whose deceased mother fled their delusions of grandeur to raise to child in a normal life. The Ronahs want her back and pay her stepfather handsomely for her return.



Seabook, though injured, escapes the colony with several other civilians and a handful of Federation survivors. They regroup at a neighboring colony about the cruiser *Space Ark*, carrying the prototype F-91 GUNDAM. The Federation government chooses not to oppose the Crossbone Vanguard and abandons the nearby colonies to the Ronahs.

Crossbone Vanguard starts removing pockets of resistance and *Space Ark* must send Seabook out in the F-91 for protection. Seabook surprises everyone with his strong newtype power and drives off the bewildered CV force. Overconfident, he then steals the F-91 to rescue Cecily, but his failure results in his father's death and nearly the capture of the F-91.

Crossbone Vanguard soon launches an all-out attack against *Space Ark* and the colony in which it hides, led by a reluctant Cecily and her overprotective bodyguard. Seabook readily defeats the CV pilots and Cecily seizes the opportunity to defect to his side. Cecily's father, KUROZO, launches a squad of automated killing machines that ravage the colony and drive our heroes out into space, where they must face Kurozo's own mobile armor.

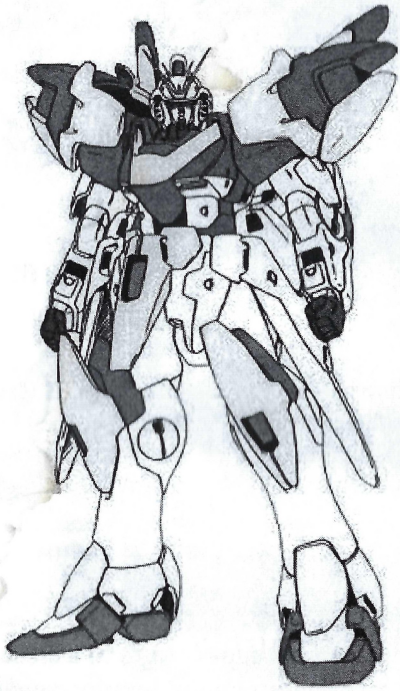
Cecily's mobile suit is quickly destroyed and she's hurled away in her spacesuit, lost to rescue. Seabook attacks in rage, employing the F-91's most bizarre powers, and finally manages to destroy Kurozo. As the Crossbone Vanguard retreat with a phyrric victory (having secured their domain at a very high cost), Seabook finds Cecily using the F-91 to augment his own newtype abilities.

# V-Gundam

## UC0153

## 51 TV Episodes 1993-1994

The Federation government has finally moved off Earth, declaring the planet an ecological preserve, though still allowing a small number of people to live there. Several colonies have followed the Ronah's example and established their own independent governments. One such new government is the ZANSCARE EMPIRE, a totalitarian religious state run by QUEEN MARIA PIA AMMONIA and looking to expand its borders through force and terror. Zanscare invades Earth, intending to use it as a paradise for the faithful. The Federation is too weak to oppose them, but an unofficial task force called the LEAGUE MILITAIRE forms to stop the maniacal Zanscare.

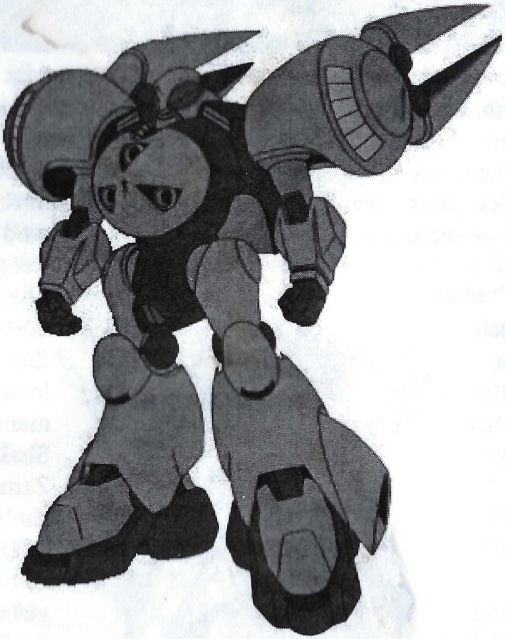


Two children, USSO EBBING and SHAKTI KARIN, live a peaceful life on Earth, where their parents have abandoned them. Their lives change dramatically when they're swept up in a battle. Usso steals a Zanscare mobile suit, embarrasses ace CHRONOCLE ASHER, and rescues MARVETTE FINGERHUT, an injured pilot of the League Militaire. To protect his friends and neighbors from the aggressive Zanscares, Usso joins the League and becomes the pilot of the new V GUNDAM (thanks to his newtype power).

Chronocle returns to space and the orbital weapon KAIRAS GIRI, but are pursued by Usso and the League cruiser *Reinforce*. Usso liberates a batch of child hostages, used by the Zanscare to ensure the loyalty of the crews manning Kairas Giri. Shakti is captured by the Zanscare, who realize she's really the daughter of Queen Maria. Chronocle spirits the girl away to the heart of the Empire, the colony of AMELIA, just before the League seizes Kairas Giri.

Usso, Marvette, and the rescued child hostages sneak aboard Amelia, while the League fleet draws the scattered Zanscare ships back to the home front. Usso and Marvette are captured and nearly executed, but the child hostages rescue both them and Shakti. The band escapes Amelia as the League launches its attack. Technical difficulties prevent the League from destroying the Zanscare fleet with Kairas Giri, so *Reinforce* flees to a neutral colony and surrenders to escape retribution.

After a brief lull, Zanscare's reorganized fleet returns to the offensive under Chronocle's command. Usso and his League comrades escape confinement and pursue Chronocle to the moon, acquiring the new V2 Gundam along the way. Usso's mother, the brilliant engineer who designed the V2, is captured by the Zanscare as they launch a second invasion of Earth. As the League frantically attempts to counter the Zanscare fleet, the Federation negotiates a cease-fire, though not before Usso's mother is killed. Both fleets withdraw back into space.



Usso now joins his father, the secret leader of the League Militaire, as the League joins forces with the Federation. Unfortunately, the Zanscare unveil their ultimate weapon – Angel Halo, an immense psychic weapon with which they will depopulate Earth with a single blast. Queen Maria assists a coup attempt to stop the insidious plan, but is killed in the process and the coup fails. While the League makes a valiant last-ditch assault, Shakti offers herself to the Zanscare as a replacement for her mother. Once in power, she uses her own Newtype abilities to sabotage Angel Halo and destroy the weapon. The loss of Angel Halo and the devastation of their fleet spell the end of the Zanscare Empire. Usso, Shakti, and Marvette return to Earth to enjoy a more peaceful life.

## Conclusion & Acknowledgements

The Universal Century continuity draws to a close with "V Gundam," having explored a variety of themes ranging from personal maturation to the exodus of humanity into space. While Bandai apparently plans to pursue alternate Gundam projects, rather than extending the Universal Century, there are many non-video projects being created to fill the gaps. Manga, novellas, and fanfictions keep the Universal Century alive, presenting clear evidence that this particular flavor of Gundam has maintained a strong following.

Long may it live.

Thanks to Mark Simmons and his Gundam Project (http://www.gundamproject.com) for reference material.

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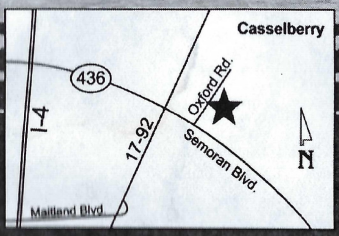


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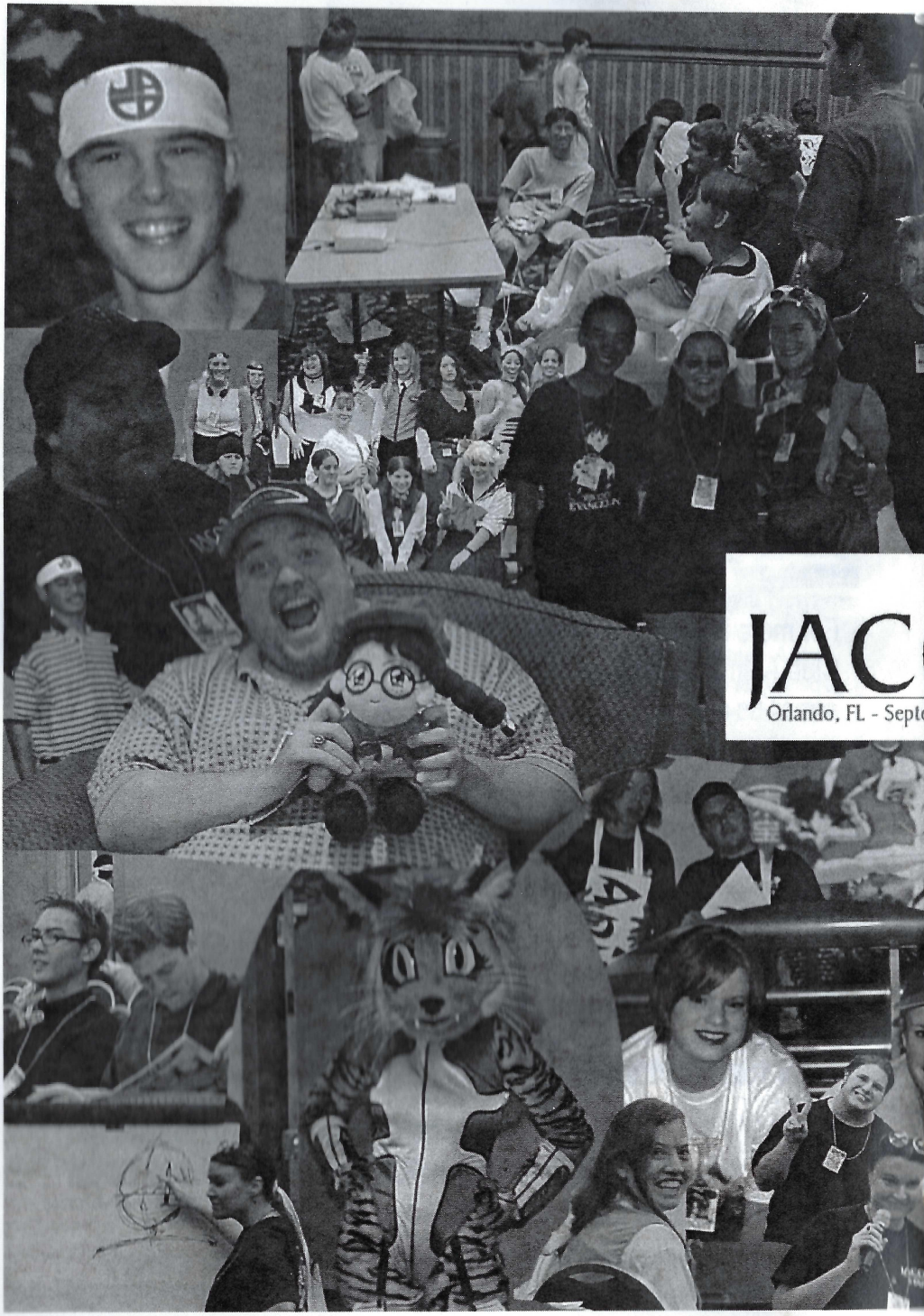
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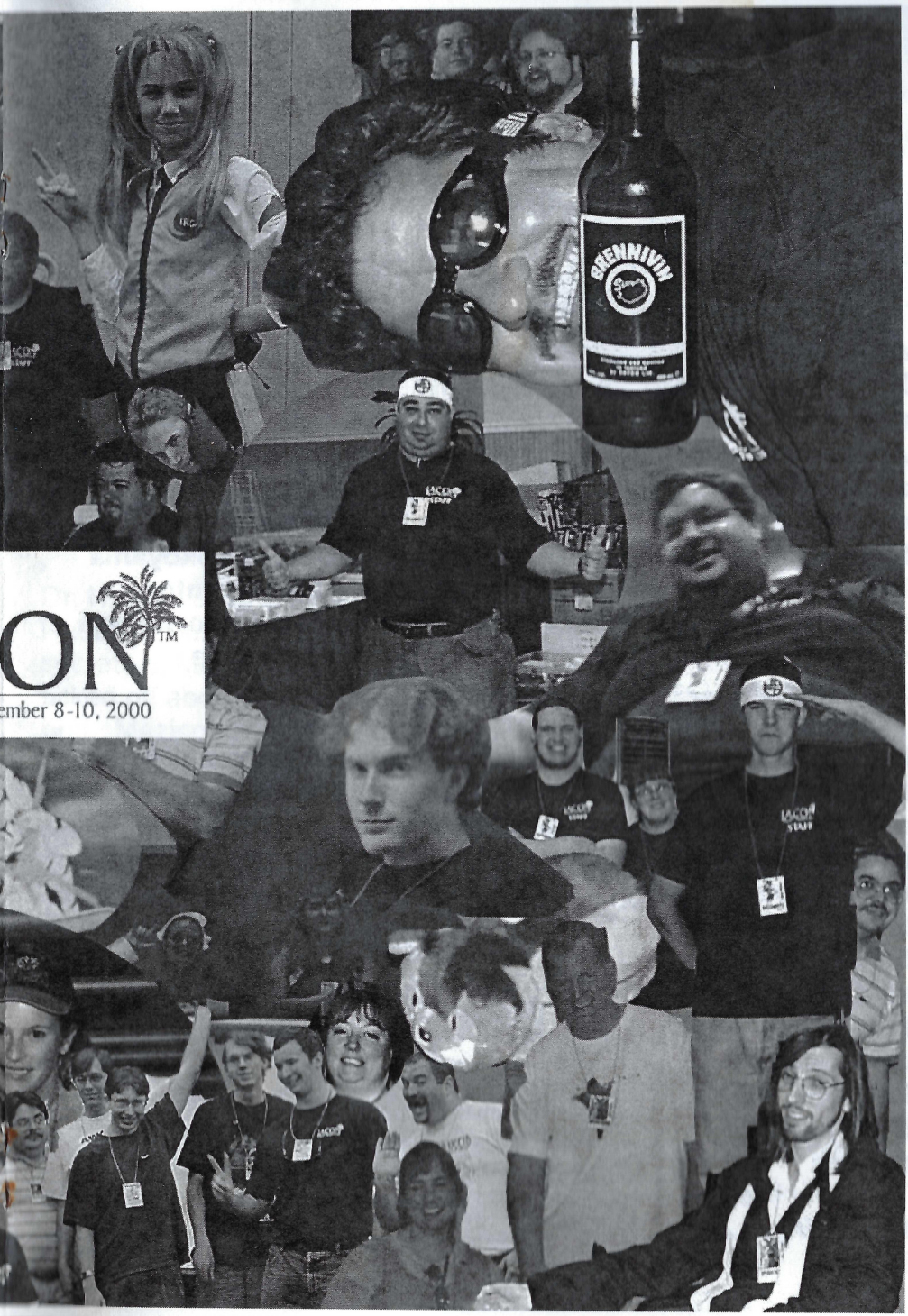
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STAFF

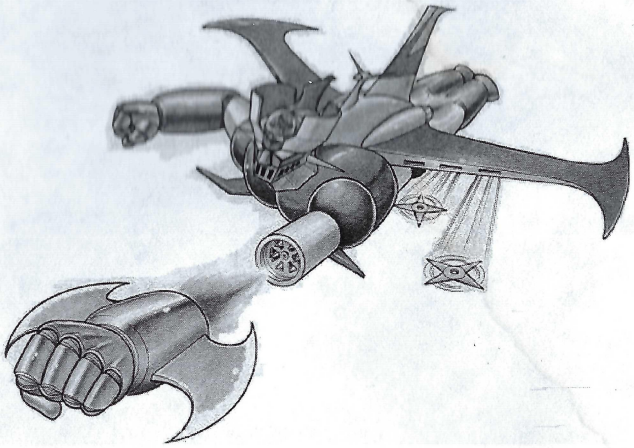
# MAZINGER

## THE MOTHER OF GIANT MECHA

**Series Overview By: Lonny Volat**

From its very start (quite literally), anime has been obsessed with mecha. In the beginning, **Osamu Tezuka** created ***Tetsuwan Atom*** (***Astro Boy*** to US audiences). "Mighty Atom" was a robot/android designed to look like a little boy. He acted like one, as well...at least, when he wasn't beating the snot out of some Earth-threatening menace. A year later (1963), **Mitsuteru Yokoyama** introduced the world to his creation, ***Tetsujin 28***. **Gigantor** (Tetsujin's US name) was different from Astro Boy in that he was controlled externally by a young boy (Jimmy Sparks, the predecessor to Daisaku Kusama of ***Giant Robo***).

In 1972, **Go Nagai** presented his own giant robot show, called ***Mazinger Z***. This television series featured the first of a new type of giant robot – the super-humanoid vehicle. In a sense, Mazinger and its progeny (Valkyries, Patlabors, Gundams, etc.) are not so much robots as they are 30- to 50-foot exoskeletons, but no one cares. They look like robots; that's all that matters.



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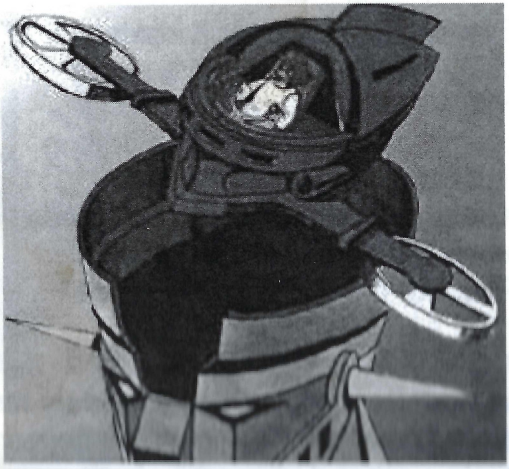

standard – two scientists, Dr. Kabuto and Dr. Hell (can you guess which one is good and which one is evil?) discover the ruins of an ancient civilization that built giant robots. Dr. Hell (the evil one, in case you couldn't figure it out) decides to use giant robots to rule the world. Dr. Kabuto decides to stop him, using a giant robot of his own design that incorporates a couple of special additions – Super Alloy Z (made of Japanium, found only in Mount Fuji – go figure) and a new power source called Photo-Atomic Energy.

Dr. Hell sends one of his chief henchmen, Baron Assler, to kill Dr. Kabuto. Before he dies, Dr. Kabuto manages to pass along the secrets of Mazinger Z to his grandson, Koji. Koji, understandably ticked off about his grandfather's demise, vows to kick Dr. Hell's butt. Mazinger Z is more than up to the task.

Koji pilots the giant mecha from the Hover Piloter, a small aircraft that settles into Mazinger Z's head. At first, the Hover Piloter is propelled by horizontal fan-blades (like a hovercraft, hence the name). Later, it acquires jet engines (and a new name – Jet Piloter, naturally).

Mazinger Z's armament includes:

- Rocket Punch (his fists fly off; they would later have axe blades added)
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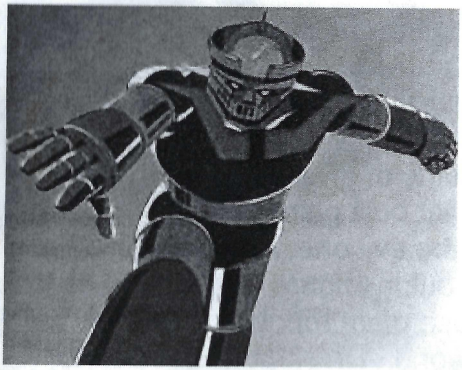
Eventually, Mazinger Z starts using the Jet Scrandar, a set of wings enabling it to fly (which it couldn't do until then) and adding Rocket Shuriken to its arsenal. Koji uses Mazinger Z and all these weapons in his "Beat the Bad Robot of the Week" adventures.



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***Mazinger Z*** had a run of 92 episodes (from December 1972 until October 1974) and spawned 2 movies in 1974 – ***Mazinger Z Meets Devilman*** (don't ask, I've never seen it) and ***Mazinger Z Vs. The Dark High General***. There were also 3 sequels, ***Great Mazinger*** (1974), ***UFO Robo Grandizer*** (1975) and ***God Mazinger*** (1984). In the United States, ***Mazinger Z*** was televised as ***Tranzor Z*** in 1985.

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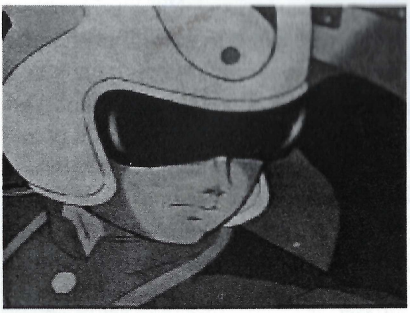

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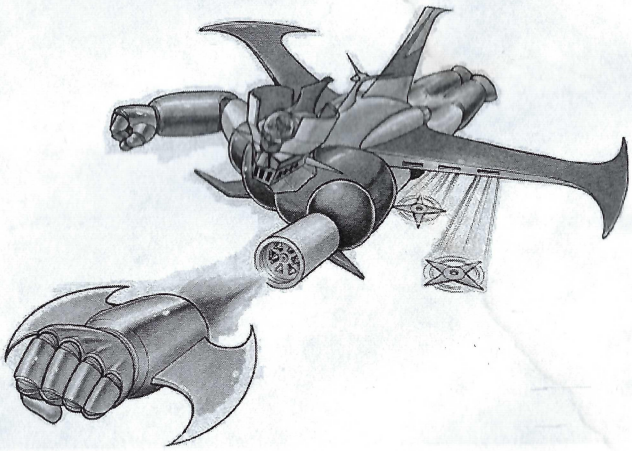

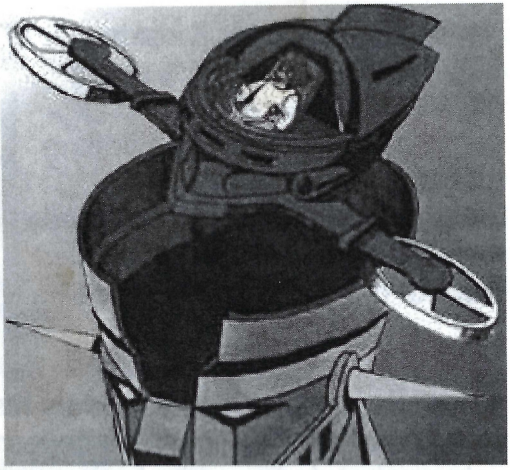

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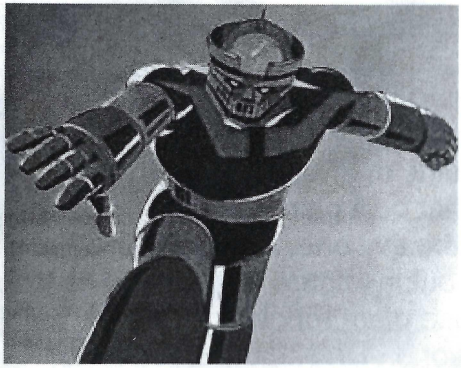

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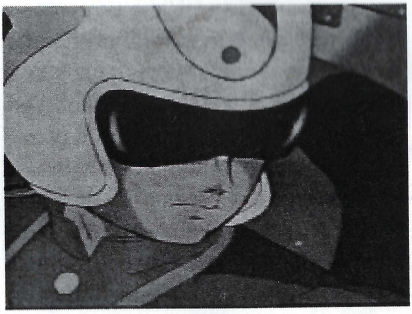

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# Gone To DVD... Every One

*By: Lonny Volat*

There is a growing trend among commercial anime companies to release the subtitled versions of TV/OAV series or movies on DVD only, reserving VHS tapes for dubbed releases intended for mass-market outlets (and those being primarily mainstream titles like *Pokemon* or *Dragonball Z*). Why is anime switching so readily from the VHS format, widely used by fans around the world, to DVD? The answer, as business majors will tell you, is called economy of scale.

The term **economy of scale** is defined as "the reduction in cost per unit resulting from increased production, realized through operational efficiencies." In other words, making something in bulk is cheaper. This is because any company that manufactures something, from the simplest widget to the most complex high-tech woogie, has certain fixed costs which do not vary with the level of production. These include rent/mortgage of facilities, insurance, production of prototypes or master copies, etc. The value of these fixed costs is divided by the number of goods that the manufacturer produces, therefore the more items he cranks out, the more units he can divide those fixed costs by and the less per-unit cost there is.

Companies that produce mass-market videos have an unbelievably huge economy of scale. When major films or popular television series are released to video, they often sell-out in large quantities. Films that fail at the box office can often make back their costs in video sales and rentals. Some films are sold directly to the video market, when the studio thinks it would cost more to promote a film than the film would make in a theatrical release. Thousands of copies of the worst crap are produced, simply because enough people will buy or rent them to justify the expense. Even those films that wind up on bargain tables will make back most of their cost-to-produce.

Japanese animation, or **anime**, has a much smaller economy of scale. Commercial companies that produce anime for domestic release have fixed costs that make up a larger proportion of their total costs. They cannot afford to match the production rates of major studios. Even if they could, they would not be able to sell all the tapes. This is why these companies often must sell anime tapes at prices of up to $30 or $40. The companies aren't being greedy; they're just selling at the **equilibrium price**, the point where they can sell all the tapes they've produced and still make a profit.

Anime fans have long complained about the disparity in pricing between subtitled releases and those dubbed in English. "They have to do more to make a dub. Why does it cost less?" The answer is in the economy of scale. The fixed costs are divided by the number of tapes sold, so the

higher the number of sales, the lower the fixed-cost-per-tape number is. For example, if a dubbed version of a tape costs $50,000 in fixed costs to produce, and sells 10,000 copies, then the fixed cost is $5 per tape. If a subtitled version of the same tape has $10,000 in fixed costs, but only sells 1,000 copies, then the fixed cost becomes $10 per tape. Hence the higher retail price.

These two factors have contributed to the growing mindset among domestic anime companies to abandon VHS tapes for DVDs. Robert Woodhead of AnimEigo recently said in an e-mail announcement, "Subtitled VHS sales have died in the last 6 months. Retail outlets (the big chain stores in particular) will not buy them anymore. Thus, our major sales outlet for subtitled VHS is direct sales to fans." But he added, "Because of packaging and mastering costs, we basically need about 500-1000 VHS unit sales in order to make it even marginally worthwhile to do a VHS edition as well as a DVD one. NOTE that this means sales of VHS tapes to people who WOULD NOT buy the DVD if that was the only option." As an example, he cited a recent AnimEigo survey for the upcoming *Macross* television series release that gives a 10:1 margin of DVD buyers over VHS buyers. He finished his announcement by stating that "DVD has destroyed the LD market, and is making large inroads on the VHS markets, especially in the anime genre. Anime fans (and in particular the fans who buy AnimEigo products) are very quality conscious."

Digital videodiscs have many advantages over videotapes, not only to fans, but to manufacturers and retailers, as well. They provide better picture and sound quality, allow the company to produce both subtitled and dubbed versions on one disc (lowering fixed costs) and add occasional bonus goodies, weigh less (lower shipping costs), and allow retailers to put more product on their shelves. Anime fans have a long history of quickly converting to new technology. Given the prevalence of **fansubbing** (fans producing their own subtitled versions of anime imported from Japan), it would not be unreasonable to assume that a high percentage of laser disc players, SVHS recorders, and editing decks sold in America during the last decade were purchased by anime fans.

However, it took many years for LD players and SVHS decks to begin to approach affordability. Within just a couple of years, DVD players have reached a price as low as $150 (though high-end machines still cost quite a bit more) and DVD-ROM drives for computers can be purchased for around $100. Also, while laser discs often sold for $50 or more, DVDs are priced the same as their VHS counterparts. In addition, affordable recordable DVD formats cannot be much farther down the road.

The anime marketplace is beginning to experience a seismic upheaval, as company after company drops its VHS lines for the DVD format. By this time next year, few, if any, new titles will be released on videotape, save those with mass-market appeal (like *Pokemon*). Since larger companies producing mass-market cinematic and television videos have proportionately larger economies of scale, they can afford to keep producing VHS tapes (and lowering prices) for a little while longer. Yet even those companies must keep an eye on where the market is heading. Within a few years, VHS will be used only for cheap repackaged videos and low-budget home recording.

The anime market is relentlessly moving away from VHS and toward DVD. Even those fans who hate having to change from one format to another must read the subtitling on the wall – they must change over to DVD sooner or later, or else accept that the market will leave them behind.

*(Continued from page 7)*

the notoriety of being one of just a handful of animated features that carried the PG rating from the MPAA (Disney's Black Caldron and Transformers: The Movie being in that same grouping). The problems for ROTJ developed when it was decided that the film would be released as an OVA, marketed to the 9-15 year old males, where ***Batman Beyond*** had a number one rating – an age group that government policy makers felt was being affected by the violence in their TV programming.

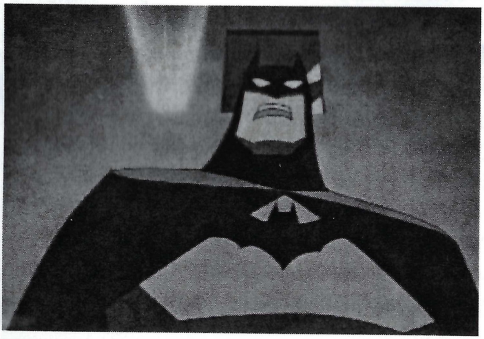
These cuts covered the gambit of areas. Some seemed somewhat justified, such as the removing of scenes showing the torture and drugging of a character, while other cuts seemed completely unwarranted. One such scene involves Batman being restrained by one of the Joker's many rope/ribbon/strap gadgets. Originally, Batman uses a knife from his utility belt to cut himself loose, a typical Batman escape technique. In the final cut, Batman just breaks the Joker's bonds using brute strength. This creates a domino effect, removing all other scenes where this knife appears. Why cut the knife? Did it violate the rope's right to exist? At some point, these careless edits do not just remove 'violent' items, but begin to change the tone or the entire direction of a story. The travesty of ROTJ can be seen in the film's title. It is the 'return' of the Joker, but the official release of the film has cut every possible reference to the Joker's death. The removal of this pivotal item completely dilutes the emotions of Bruce Wayne, Batman, Tim Drake and the rest of the Bat Family.

Why is editing of content such an issue now? I just watched an episode of classic animated TV programming from 1964, courtesy of Cartoon Network's "Boomerang" show, the original ***Adventures of Johnny***

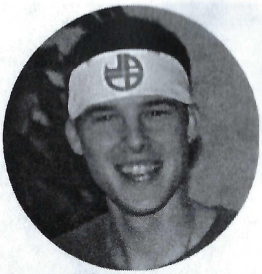
***Quest***. In this, episode nearly ten (10) people were killed, and Race Bannon injured another eight (8) directly. Why were these violent acts just fine in 1964, but thirty-six years later, it is now unacceptable? The generation that grew-up on this Hanna-Barbara classic are now the leaders of the free world, and there has not been a world-ending crisis. There was not a jump in violent crime because of Johnny's adventures, so why do the authorities feel that this trail of logic is sound now?

In the 1985 classic, ***Robotech***, we witnessed the destruction of thousands of spacecraft, both Zentradi and RDF, but Harmony Gold was required to remove the scenes that showed the blood from Roy Folker's injury. Not only have standards fluctuated over the years, but also the restraints seem haphazard at best. Standards have become more restrictive of the past 40 years, while the outcry against TV violence in animation has grown louder. It seems that the increase in violence has been in primetime programming, but youth programming is easier to curtail and control. You will never see a change in ABC's ***NYPD Blue***, because of one deciding factor, that show's primary viewer ship has the right to vote. Therefore politicians cater to that group. It is easy to create restrictions for the age group that is targeted by ROTJ, no one argues when you are "helping the children".

The current direction of the U.S.'s most successful TV animation house, Warner Bros, has taken a turn for the worse. Current leadership now feels that the Action Drama is not appropriate for its programming line-up, leaving such shows as Batman, Superman and Batman Beyond behind in its wake. With the treatment of ***Escaflowne*** by Fox, and ROTJ by Warner Bros, there is no hope for dramatic story telling in U.S. animation for sometime.



# MIKE'S QUICK AND DIRTY REVIEWS



## Outlaw Star 8.7

Good morning class, welcome to Futuristic Space Action 101. As the box will tell you, get ready to be introduced to a different outer space in a different galaxy. A galaxy where space pirates rule, and as colonization continues a group of individuals exist... individuals that defy the pirates' iron hands but don't exactly follow society's "norms" either. Outlaws. Focus in on planet Centennial III where you'll meet Gene Starwind and his sidekick/business partner, Jim. Gene, an entrepreneur of sorts, is always looking for a job that'll offer a fair amount of cash. Of course, fame wouldn't hurt either; and when a mysterious woman hires Gene as her bodyguard and they get attacked by some big time pirates; what are you left to do but sit back and enjoy the ride. Outlaw Star will take you all over the place. If you like action with a story that'll keep guessing where you'll be take next, this is for you. Not a whole lot of heavy drama, and no off the wall science fiction that never gets explained, so for the fan that likes to keep second guessing who's going to backstab who, this may not be the best choice, but for the action buff with an addiction to eye candy, get ready to be teased with a very imaginative setting. Don't get to disappointed if the story takes an unexpected turn; there is a lot going on in those distant galaxies. Excellent contrasting characters and beautifully animated action sequences. So if you're that action aficionado, you've hit the mark with this one.

## Fushigi Yuugi 6.5

Good from afar, far from good. I don't mind romance, and I certainly don't mind drama, and on the surface *Fushigi Yuugi* is a nicely far-fetched fantasy/reality combination of the two. Throw in some comedy and some interesting action sequences and you'll be entertained with this TV series... if you're female. Deeper into the show this pureed form of drama mostly left me confused and not really wanting much more. An interesting story about a girl, who makes her dreams come true by coming to possess the seven stars of Suzaku. The story itself is a spell. The one who reads it all the way through, if you make it that far, will be given the powers of the stars and granted a wish like the girl in the story. Great story but all the in depth character interaction couldn't keep me from hunting for snacks in the kitchen. Tamahome's voice just isn't right and Miaka reminds me of that girl that sat in the middle of class telling everyone about everything she ever wanted. I really liked the action sequences and the overall story. Yu Watase certainly is talented, but it just wasn't my cup of tea.

# Buying Animation Cels on... eBay™

**AS TOLD BY: TAD SIMMONS**

For those of you unfamiliar with eBay (http://www.ebay.com/), it is an online auction site; many claim it is *the* online auction site. There is a slew of auction sites on the Internet, but except in narrow categories, eBay blows them all away. For instance, there are currently (21 Sep 2000) 431 items matching the search for "anime cel" on eBay. For comparison:

- Yahoo! Auctions has 42,
- iBidUSA does not have a search function that I could find (oh, that is useful...),
- the OrlandoSentinel.com classifieds had 0,
- auctions.com is out of business,
- Amazon.com auctions had 0 (but 1 match in zShops),
- and the Go network now uses eBay.

Considering that, in this very non-scientific survey, eBay had 10 times as many as the other sites combined, I will stick with eBay until there is a dedicated, English language anime auction site.

There are two major problems with eBay. The first is that there are so many items available at any given time, and in so many categories, it can be difficult to find what you're looking for. The second is that eBay is only cursorily supervised. There are certain keywords that are disallowed, and an auction can be cancelled due to a complaint, but nobody actually oversees the auction process (though there is a user review process).

## ***How do I find what I am looking for?***

There are two ways to find something in eBay: browse a category, and search. Browsing is pretty easy, but it can be difficult to find the appropriate category. The categories are not as well defined as one might hope. Anime cels are most often found in the "Collectibles:Animation Characters:Japanese Animation" and "Collectibles:Animation Art:Production Art" categories, but I've also seen them other places (often in the "Toys, Bean Bag Plush:Action Figures" category associated with the show).

The search engine is much, much faster.

Luckily, anime fans usually have an easier time than most finding things relevant to our search, thanks to the Japanese nature of many of keywords. More than just the words you are searching for, eBay's search engine provides good options. My favorite is the option to control the order of search results. Once the search results page comes up, there is a drop-down menu on the right that says "Sort: Items ending first". That is OK if you are just browsing, but if you are checking eBay regularly, you will find the "Newly-listed items first" much more useful. That way, the latest items are right there for you to look at. By paying attention to when you checked last, you don't go over the same items again and again. I make a point of looking at the top two or three items each time, so it's easy to see when I get back to those I've already seen.

If you are searching for an individual category, you can limit your search to items in that category tree. Say you were in the "Collectibles" page, entered your search term, and checked the "Search only in Collectibles" box before hitting the search button. That would limit your search to only those items in "Collectibles" categories, the most common categories for cels. If you were instead in the "Collectibles: Animation Characters" category, you would search all of the subcategories under "Collectibles:Animation Characters", but none of the items under "Collectibles:Animation Art".

Sound confusing? It isn't all that bad, since we usually can ignore it without getting completely overwhelmed with responses.

I almost never do a category-limited search, unless I get a lot of unwanted entries. This can be avoided by careful selection of keywords. For example, "under arrest" consists of two common English words (short for *You're Under Arrest*, also called *YUA*, but people have severe problems spelling "You're" correctly, so I just search for "under arrest"). However, there are not that many auctions which have those two words in their title (39 items as of 29 Sep 2000, and only two – for the Miles Davis album also called *You're Under Arrest* – do not refer to the anime series).

My regular search routine:

- anime cel
- animation cel
- yawara
- natsumi
- under arrest
- shichauzo

Also, once a week or so, I search on "anime cell" and "animeation cell". It is rarer to find something worthwhile from someone who doesn't know how to spell "cel," but it does happen.

## ***Who should I buy from?***

This boils down to "who should you trust?" There is a user feedback system on eBay, but the people we're dealing with will often not have many responses. However, do avoid anyone with significant negative feedback.

For big-ticket items (over $200 or so), consider using an escrow service. With an escrow service, you send your payment to a third party. When they receive your payment, they send a notice to the

seller that they have the money. The seller then ships the item to you. If the item is as advertised, you tell the escrow service to release the money to the seller. If not, you send the item back to the seller and get your money back.

## How much do I pay?

That is up to you. But there a few things you definitely want to look out for.

Read the item description carefully. REPEAT: **READ** the item description **CAREFULLY**. If you have any questions, do not make a bid until you have contacted the seller and received an acceptable response.

Make sure that you are bidding on what you think you are. Check to make sure the words "production cel" or something like "used to make the show" are in the description somewhere. Unless, of course, you are looking for one of the various types of seri-cel.

Do not rely on the cel description to accurately portray the characters in the cel. It isn't that rare for sellers to misidentify characters. Badly. I recently saw a couple *Silent Möbius* statues labeled as *YUA* characters.

Make your value judgment and stick to it. Decide how much the item is worth to you, make that your maximum bid, and then leave it alone. Getting into a bidding frenzy will only make you spend more than planned. Once you set your maximum, eBay will bid for you until your maximum bid is reached.

Also, make sure you know how much the shipping will be. Most cels ship for between $3 and $7, and the shipping cost is usually declared in the auction description. Personally, I subtract the shipping cost form how much I am willing to pay and use that lower number for my max bid.

## Hey! Someone beat me by $1.00 at the last minute!

Ah, you have encountered a Sniper. These are people who wait until the final seconds of any auction, then make one attempt to outbid you, without allowing you time to respond. This usually results in the Sniper out-bidding your max by only the bid increment. There is no way to see what the Sniper's max was, since eBay only lists final bids (which are max for everyone but the winner, and the winning bid for the person who gets the item). If you did not truly bid the max you were willing to pay, they will annoy you to death (a fact one friend of mine has never accepted). If you did correctly set your max, it shouldn't bother you. But, it probably will anyway.

## So what does it all mean?

You just have to realize that while eBay has some truly amazing deals, there is also the danger of being taken in by a fraudulent seller. Be knowledgeable about what you are buying, remember that anything that is too good to be true probably is, and take steps to minimize your exposure.

# FAN FICTION

## *Neon Genesis Evangelion: Elsewhere Part 2*

©1999 R. Alexander Spoerer

Morning.

Through the impenetrable barrier of window blinds, a single bead of sunlight managed to escape, and shone on Shinji's face.

Shinji stirred from his slumber and sat up in bed, then looked toward Rei who was still asleep.

He glanced at the small clock on the night table between their beds, and noticed it was time to get up anyway.

No rest for the weary...

Shinji slid his legs over the edge of the bed and yawned loudly.

"Com'on, Rei. It's time to get up."

Rei responded with a grumble. Standing up, he walked over to her bed, and proceeded to shake her shoulders.

"Wake up, Rei. We've got to get ready for school."

She turned onto her back, and looked at him sleepily.

"Do we have to?"

Shinji rolled his eyes as he made his way over to the closet.

"Yes, we do. Even if we can't remember anything, we still have to go to school... Unfortunately..."

The closet door opened, and he found several boys and girls school uniforms that Ichiro had bought for them. He took two uniforms, and tossed one onto Rei's bed.

"I'll take the bathroom first."

Rei finally sat up at his statement, "Hey! Why can't I go first? I need more time than you do!"

"Exactly," replied Shinji as he grabbed his toiletries, and opened the door, "That's why I'm going first. I'd like to be able to take a shower today."

He smiled to Rei, as he closed the door, narrowly evading the pillow she had tossed at him.

Stupid door lock... Couldn't they have made it a bit easier to use?

He grumbled as he stepped into the shower, and turned on the water.

The warm water traveled down Shinji's body in miniature waterfalls and coalesced into a small lake at his feet. The lake swiftly disappeared into the abyss that was the shower drain, and whisked the water to some unknown, mysterious place.

As he lathered himself, various thoughts floated through his mind, occasionally bumping into each other like small pieces of driftwood on a swift flowing river.

He wondered what school was like. Technically, he had gone to school for his whole life, and he could remember what he learned, but other than that he had no idea what it was like. He may as well be a kindergartner going to preschool for the first time.

What kind of student had he

been? A grade A genius or the school flunky? Was he popular, or an outcast?

All these questions beckoned to the answered, and all he could come up with was a blank.

As he drenched his head in the stream of water, another thought broke through the mists of his mind. This day should prove to be both interesting and terrifying at the same time.

Shinji wasn't so sure if he wanted to go through with it, though.

Then again, what choice did he have?

His concentration was broken when he heard the shower partition open.

Removing his head from the shower stream, he was greeted by a sight that he never thought he would see: A totally naked Asuka.

Imprinted on her face, an expression of both shock and surprise. However, in a matter of seconds that expression transformed into one of anger.

Both of Asuka's hands formed into fists, her arms locked to either side of her as she raised her voice.

"WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING!?"

Normally, the sight of a beautiful, naked girl would deprive him of whatever mental faculties that he possessed, but for some reason, that statement snapped him out of his stupor.

After he regained some modicum of brain power, Shinji pointed a finger at Asuka, his voice raised in accusation, "What am I doing? You're the one who walked in on me!"

The red head didn't skip a beat, as she countered, "If you would've locked the door, then I wouldn't have come in!"

Ouch, score 1 Asuka.

"Well if you weren't deaf and blind, you would have heard the water already running, and my clothes in a neat pile outside the shower!"

That was one for him.

Asuka gritted her teeth and began to yell at him.

"You pervert! You left it unlocked on purpose, just so you could see me naked!"

"No, I didn't! I just couldn't figure out the stupid lock, so I left it unlocked hoping that people would be smart enough to figure out that someone was in here!"

"Oh, so now you're calling me stupid?"

Shinji smiled, his voice filled with sarcasm, "Of course, because if I called you a bitch it wouldn't be nice."

That did it.

Asuka's eyes widened, and she screamed as she pounced on Shinji.

"You baka!"

Shinji was caught off guard as Asuka literally jumped into the shower smacking and hitting him, pushing both of them into the water.

He lifted his arms to defend himself from the onslaught of the red-haired valkrie, unfortunately the water that flowed blinded him.

"Hey! Stop! Ow!"

Finally, Shinji reached out at

what he thought were Asuka's arms, and grabbed.

Asuka immediately stopped.

That was weird. Her arms felt really soft, and as he moved out of the water a voice in the back of his mind tried to make itself heard, although it was still muffled by the thick layers of confusion blocking his mind. And as he moved forward, Asuka moved backward.

Why was she so quiet all of a sudden? That big mouth of hers just wouldn't stop before...

Shinji's thought was interrupted when regained his sight, and saw what he was really holding onto.

It was right then the voice punched through the confusion and cried out urgently in his mind trying to prevent something horrible from occurring.

However, it was too little, too late.

Shinji's hands were both firmly attached to Asuka's breasts, and she had a look of outrage etched on her face, as she stared at Shinji's hands.

He could almost hear the voice sigh in resignation when it realized that it had failed to prevent the catastrophe.

Unfortunately for him, the worst had yet to pass.

"Umm. What are you two doing?"

Both whipped their heads toward the new voice, and saw that said voice belonged to Rei, who stood at the door with her arms at her sides.

Shinji immediately let go of Asuka's assets, and jumped behind the shower partition.

Asuka realized that she was totally nude, and grabbed a towel off a nearby rack, covering herself.

"We're not doing anything!" retorted Asuka, her red face betraying her utter embarrassment.

Rei crossed her arms, and a mischievous smile played across her lips, "Ah, I see. So then why were you showering together?"

"We weren't showering together!"

"Yeah! Asuka walked in on me!"

Asuka gave Shinji a look that would have sent Cerebus running away in terror.

He hoped Rei would take some mercy and stop her inquisition into the matter.

Of course, that would have been asking for too much.

"Oh, so that was when you grabbed Asuka's breasts?"

Once again, the mouth proved faster that the brain as he replied.

"Yes! I mean, no!"

Uh, oh...

Asuka's fist connected with Shinji's cheek and caused him to fall on his ass. His hand rubbed the now sensitive area.

"Pervert!"

Asuka then stormed out of the bathroom, with only a towel that loosely covered her.

Shinji looked at Rei who chuckled as she began to walk away from the bathroom.

"Hurry up, Shin-chan. I need to take a shower, too."

Before he could totally regain his bearings, he heard Rei's voice once more, an amused tone to it, "Oh, and don't forget to push the small button that's beside the knob."

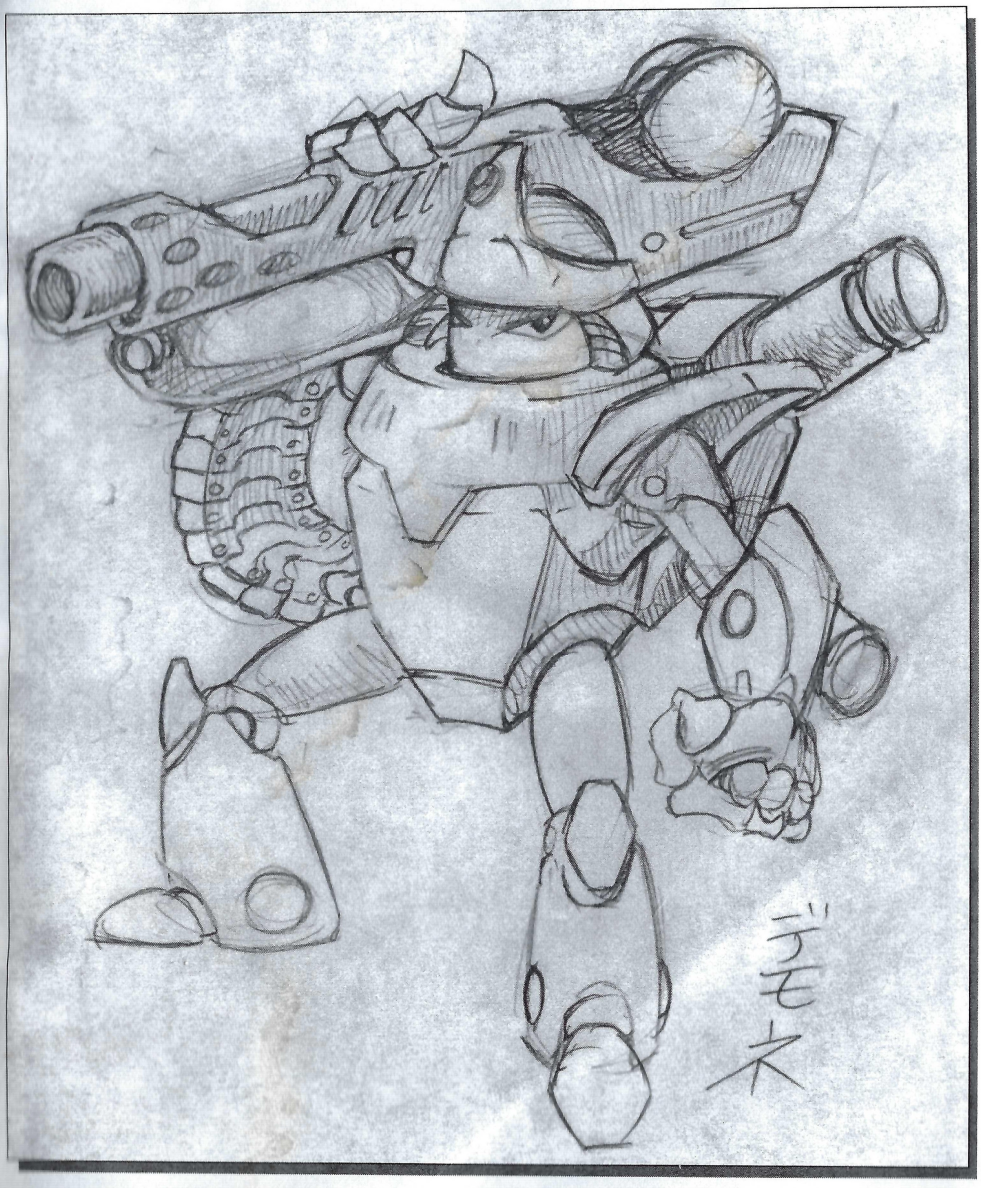
Shinji stood, and did the only thing he could do.

He locked the door.

# FAN ART!!

Valeska Gary © 2000

R. Van Cleave © 2000



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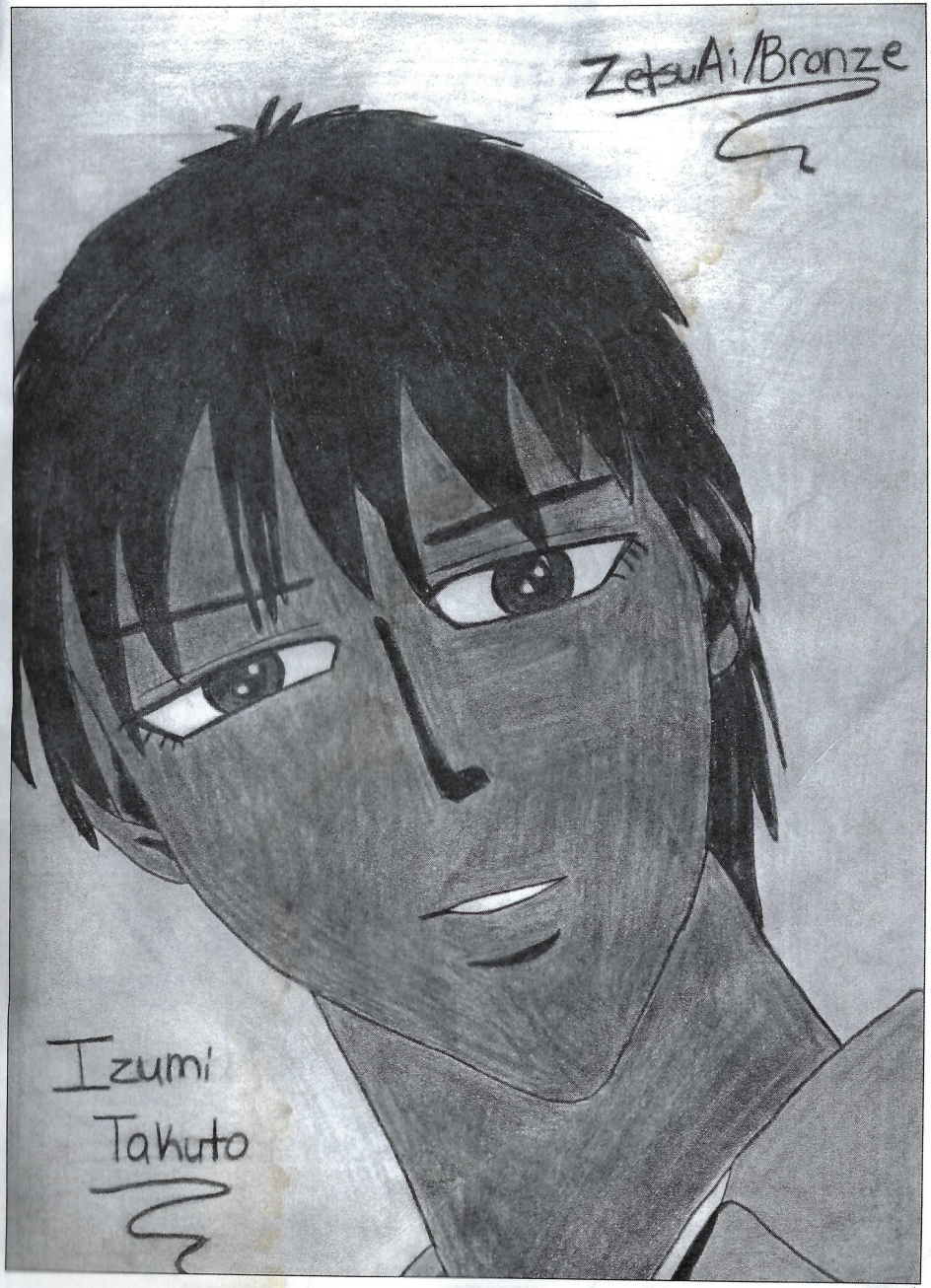
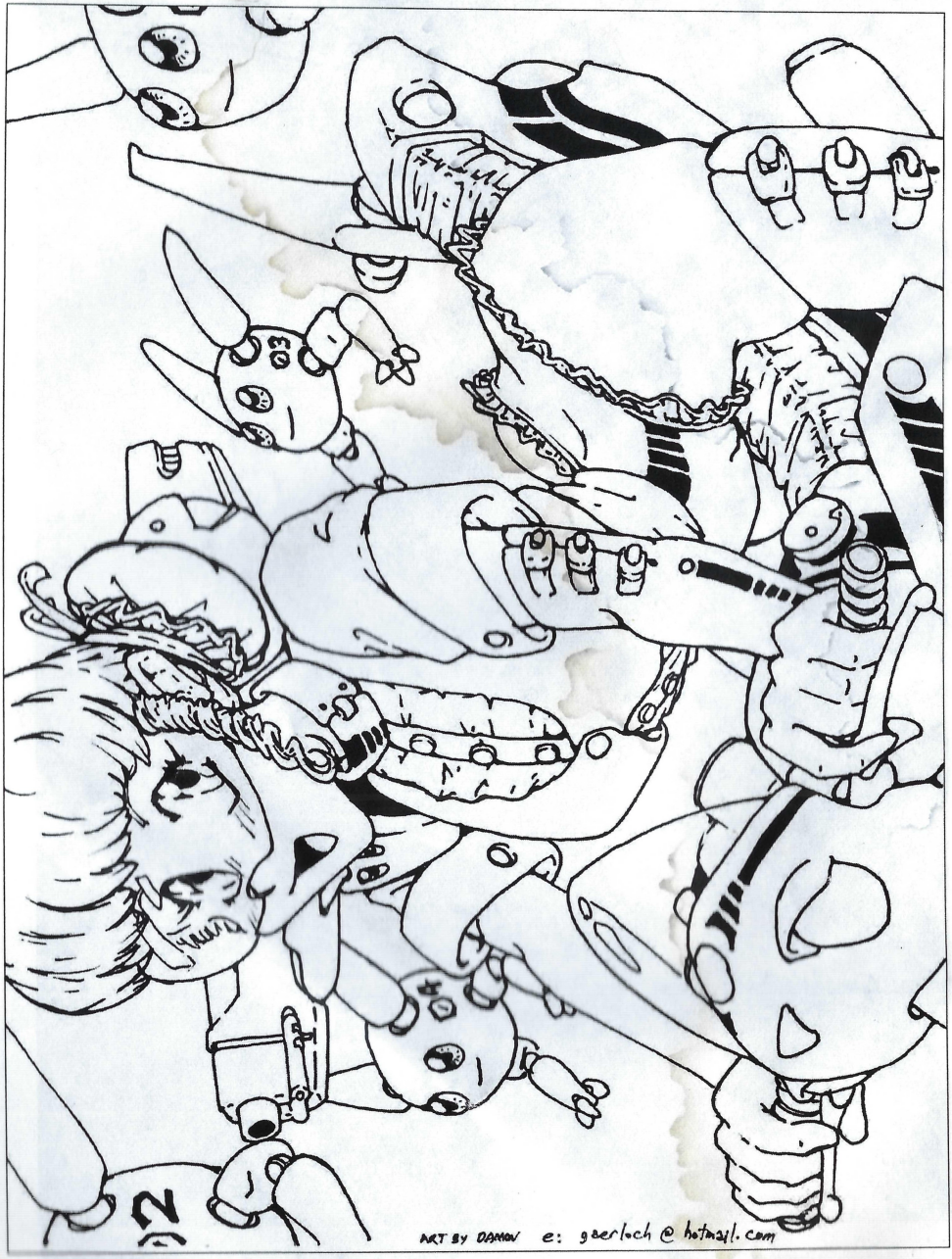
Valeska Gary © 2000




**Valeska Gary © 2000**




Damon © 2000

# *The Editor Would Like To Thank The Following People:*

***Joe Vecchio***
- For keeping the course and setting the bar for all those Presidents that would follow.

***John Stepp and Lonny Volat***
- For being there every time I have needed help with this publication. It makes the job much easier.

***Anime Sushi***
- Thanks for giving us the opportunity to return to MegaCon this year.

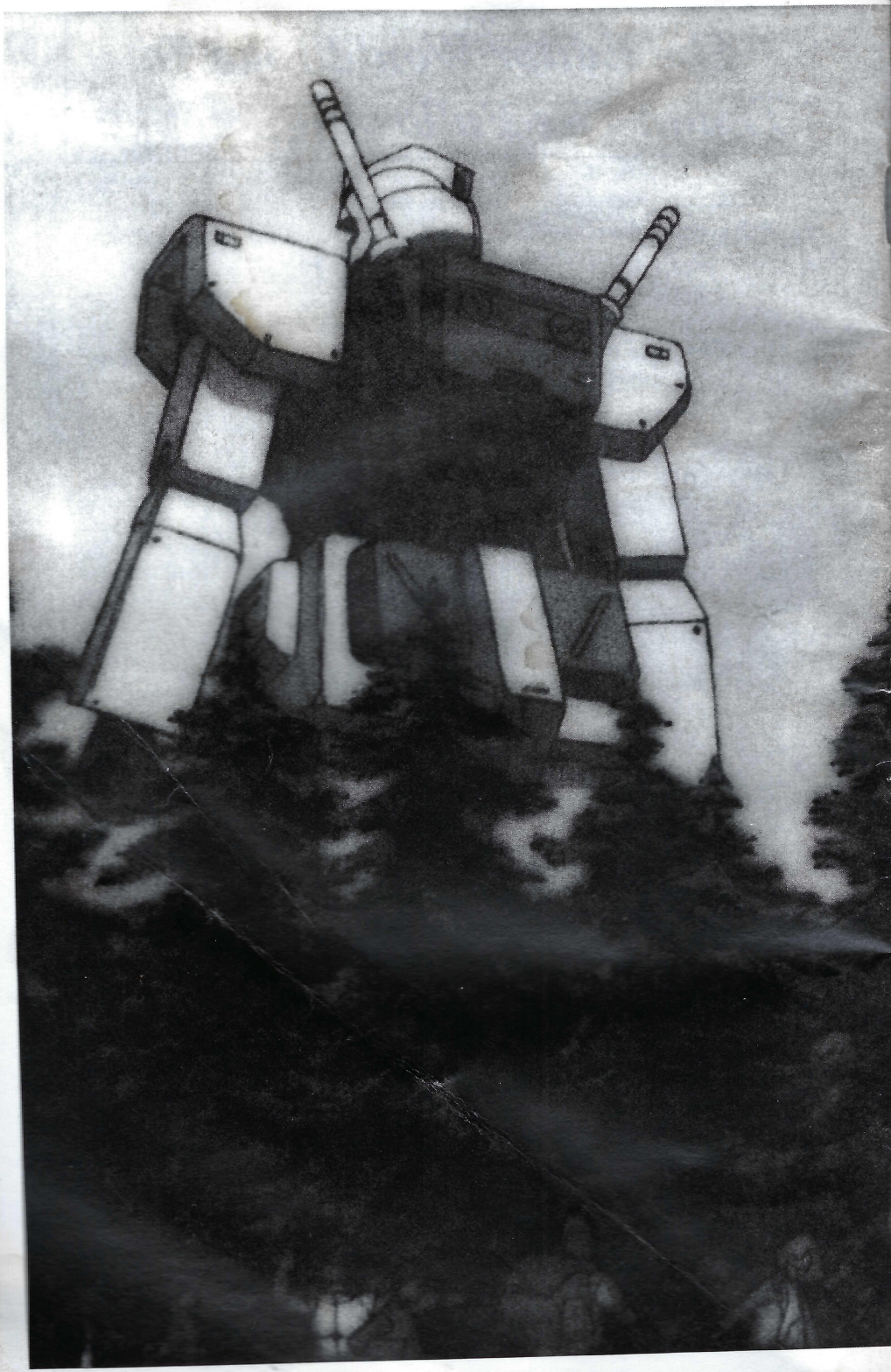
***Mabaroshi***
- Your assistance before, during and after JACON was invaluable. Go visit his site at http://www.risingsun.net

***Dierdre Smith***
- For covering for me when I do that Japaheno stuff.

***Warner Bros.***
- For showing that Disney isn't the only group of idiots on the American animation front. *What were they thinking?!?*

***Optimus Prime***
- For teaching me that a great leader must have unyielding determination and the willingness to sacrifice themselves for the greater good.

***Disney***
- What a great idea, a bucket... full of ***booze***!

***Tad Simmons***
- For keeping me sane, even when I thought I was the only idiot with a problem.

***Joey Snackpants, Esq.***
- For keeping Disco alive!